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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

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TAGS: PGOV KDEM NI ELECTIONS

SUBJECT: KANO GOVERNOR DISCUSSES ELECTIONS, TERM AGENDA

REF: ABUJA 162

Classified By: Political Counselor Russell J. Hanks for Reasons 1.4 (b & d).

¶1. (C) During a May 10 meeting with PolOffs, newly re-elected Kano State Governor Ibrahim Shekarau discussed the conduct and outcome of the April polls and provided insight into his agenda for the next term. Governor Shekarau expressed satisfaction with the conduct of the April 14 and 21 elections, noting that "some minor flaws and problems do not invalidate the exercise." He added that international observer statements criticizing Nigeria's "democratic process as fraudulent" only "hurt Nigerians in the end." Shekarau stressed that while the ANPP will seek redress for many gubernatorial, assembly, and local government races in the tribunals, he will not support the effort because "cancellation of the polls will not produce anything positive."

¶2. (C) When asked about the credibility of allegations that the PDP had engaged in rigging, ballot box theft and stuffing, and intimidation to achieve victory at the polls, the Governor dismissed the reports and averred that the "PDP would have won anyway" since the ANPP "was not well organized." Shekarau asserted that "Buhari did not bother to campaign in the South West and South East and therefore, did not have a foothold there." Furthermore, Governor Shekarau attempted to debunk the "myth of Buhari" as a candidate popular with the masses. He claimed that Buhari "enjoyed little support from the grassroots" and hence, could not muster the requisite votes. When asked about his impression of President-elect Umaru Yar'Adua, Shekarau opined that "as governor, Yar'Adua was a good, honest man"; as President, Shekarau speculated that Yar'Adua would be "far more independent than people assume."

¶3. (C) Governor Shekarau explained that over the next four years, his administration would concentrate on improvements to Kano's infrastructure and commercial, education, and health sectors. He emphasized that since states are increasingly autonomous from the federal government, they must focus on revenue generation through taxing citizens and developing an economic climate conducive to private enterprise. To revamp Kano's steadily declining economy and attract foreign investors, Kano State Government is working to repair and expand roadways, increase access to water and electricity, and cultivate a skilled labor force. The Governor underscored the need to continue "sensitizing the population to the dictates of Islam" through the Sharia

"societal re-orientation" reform initiative (known as "A Daidaita Sahu") he introduced in 2003. The initiative targets education, youth employment, and women and children's issues.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Ibrahim "Mallam" Shekarau won re-election as Kano State Governor on April 14. In late 2006, Shekarau's perceived allegiance to President Obasanjo distanced him from General Buhari and ANPP leadership. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) indicted Shekarau in February 2007 on corruption charges, though his name remained on the ballots; we have heard from contacts that Shekarau brokered a deal (the details of which remain unclear) with Obasanjo to not ban him from the gubernatorial race. On January 24 (reftel), Governor Shekarau told the Ambassador that Buhari would sweep Kano State; however, Shekarau's statements to us may suggest that he has decided to support Obasanjo and Yar'adua since the fraudulent results give them the upper hand. At the same time, given his own victory it is unsurprising that Shekarau will not support the ANPP as it heads to the tribunals. While Embassy contacts allege that Shekarau engaged in "competitive rigging" in Kano on April 14, we cannot assume that such rigging was anywhere on the scale of the PDP, whose machinery and resources were far greater and better organized. On April 15, PolOff was approached in Kano by what appeared to be a SSS agent, who confided that members of Shekarau's circle were doling out bribes to INEC officials in advance of the April 16 announcement of results. END COMMENT.

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